

The Randon Jottings of Donald Jay from Nelson in Pendle.

Refusing To Maintain A Mother

In the small town of Briercliffe with Extwistle, nestled within the rolling hills of Lancashire, an unfortunate situation had unfolded. The Burnley Advertiser chronicled the story on a fine Saturday, the 13th of May in 1865.

The court was abuzz with anticipation as Jonas Lee, a servant man at Southfield House, stood accused of refusing to provide for his aging mother, Sarah Lee. Sarah, now old and infirm, found herself reliant on the support of the township, receiving a meager 2s. 6d. a week to sustain herself.

Jonas, a widower, stood before the bench with a weekly income of 16s. It was evident that he had the means to contribute to his mother's welfare, as no dependents relied upon him for support. The proceedings revealed that an order had been issued against Jonas the previous year, mandating his financial responsibility for his mother's care. However, the order had never been served.

Mr. Hartley, representing Jonas, took the floor to defend his client's position. He argued that Jonas had a daughter and grandchild to support, insinuating that his obligations lay elsewhere. But upon further investigation, it became apparent that the daughter had married and her husband, Jonas' son-in-law, resided in Marsden, or perhaps had recently relocated.

The courtroom listened intently, weighing the circumstances and the moral obligations at hand. The bench, composed of wise and compassionate magistrates, deliberated on the matter before reaching a decision.

Recognizing the importance of caring for aging parents, the bench firmly asserted that Jonas Lee had a duty to provide for his mother. They acknowledged his modest income and the presence of his daughter and grandchild but deemed these factors insufficient to absolve him of his responsibilities.

In light of the evidence and the needs of Sarah Lee, the magistrates pronounced their judgment. They issued an order, demanding that Jonas contribute 2s. a week towards his mother's upkeep. It was a modest sum, but one that would alleviate the burden on the township and ensure Sarah's well-being in her final years.

As the gavel fell, the courtroom sighed with a mix of relief and disappointment. The verdict highlighted the societal expectation that individuals must care for their elderly parents, emphasizing the importance of family ties and responsibility.

Sarah Lee left the courtroom with a sense of reassurance, knowing that her son would be compelled to support her. She cherished the hope that their strained relationship might mend over time, buoyed by the court's decision and the prospect of a more stable future.

And so, the tale of Jonas Lee and his mother, Sarah, served as a reminder to all that familial duty should never be neglected. The story became a talking point within the community, sparking conversations about filial piety and the value of intergenerational support. It was a testament to the endurance of tradition and the collective consciousness that guided the hearts and minds of the people of Briercliffe with Extwistle.

By Donald Jay